



PRESS RELEASE

Nordic countries estimate high costs from chemical exposure

Brussels, 17 November 2014 - A body representing Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden has suggested that up to 40% of the health costs associated with several serious male reproductive problems may be due to exposure to hormone disrupting chemicals (also known as endocrine disrupting chemicals EDCs). (1)

"The Cost of Inaction: Socioeconomic analysis of costs linked to effects of endocrine disrupting substances on male reproductive health" is published today by Norden – The Nordic Council of Ministers.

The authors chose to focus on negative effects on male reproductive health (genital defects in baby boys known as cryptorchidism and hypospadias; poor semen quality; and cancer of the testes known as testicular germ cell cancer) because "the causal link between exposure to endocrine disruptors and negative effects is relatively well established".

The report makes clear that only a portion of the total costs of these conditions are due to exposure to endocrine disruptors. It calculates the etiological, or attributable, portion at 2%, 20% and 40%. The authors chose these portions on the basis of available knowledge and consultation with experts.

For the European Union (EU) as a whole, the costs are estimated at €59 million, €600 million and €1,200 million per year respectively. Thus if exposure to hormone disrupting chemicals is responsible for the highest portion, two-fifths or 40%, up to €1,200 million could potentially be saved annually.

"This report should provide the final blow to industry lobbying to slow regulatory action on endocrine disrupting chemicals. By putting the portion caused by EDCs at up to 40%, these governments have clearly demonstrated that the costs to male citizens' health from EDC exposure could be very significant, and we therefore shouldn't be using these chemicals," says Lisette van Vliet, HEAL's Senior Policy Advisor.

After a series of delays in implementing regulation on endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs), the EU Commission's health directorate (DG SANCO) has opened a public consultation on the criteria to identify endocrine disrupting chemicals in the EU biocides and pesticides legislation. The move is widely understood to offer industry an opportunity to provide information about the costs of the associated potential market bans for their endocrine-disrupting pesticides and biocides. The consultation is being conducted through an online questionnaire and will run until 16 January 2015. (2)

Norden report on HEAL's estimate

In June 2014, HEAL published a report on health costs associated with exposure to hormone disrupting chemicals which showed that they may be costing up to €31 billion per year in the EU. The HEAL calculation covered conditions that expert scientists involved in EDC research identify as "endocrine-related", including not only cryptorchidism and hypospadias, infertility and cancer of the testes (covered in the Norden report) but also cancer of the breast and prostate; children's behavioural

disorders, such as autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and obesity and diabetes. (3) HEAL used a portion of 2-5% causation.

The Norden report offers an affirmation of the HEAL findings. While recognising that the HEAL calculation differed and covered many more diseases, it noted: "Even though there are differences in the assumptions between this report and the report from HEAL, the estimated costs related to male reproductive health are roughly similar." (1) (4)

Notes to Editors

1. "The Cost of Inaction: Socioeconomic analysis of costs linked to effects of endocrine disrupting substances on male reproductive health" <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A763442&dswid=-8392>

2. Public Consultation on defining criteria for identifying endocrine disruptors in the context of the implementation of the plant protection product regulation and the biocidal products regulation http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/dgs_consultations/food/consultation_20150116_endocrine-disruptors_en.htm

3. Health costs in the EU: How much is related to Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals? http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/18062014_final_health_costs_in_the_european_union_how_much_is_realted_to_edcs.pdf

4. The Norden report put the negative effects on human male reproduction, including some "indirect costs" (based on number of QALYs lost, for example) at €0.6-1.2 billion. The HEAL report put costs of cryptorchidism and hypospadias at €0.9-1.3 billion.

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The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union (EU). With the support of more than 70 member organisations, HEAL brings independent expertise and evidence from the health community to different decision-making processes. Our broad alliance represents health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, doctors, nurses, cancer and asthma groups, citizens, women's groups, youth groups, environmental NGOs, scientists and public health research institutes. Members include international and Europe-wide organisations as well as national and local groups. Website: www.env-health.org

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